Slug Pellet Application
(update 6/8/10)

Best practice recommendations for Red Tractor Farm Assurance –
Crops and Sugar Beet and Fresh Produce Sectors

Best Practice Recommendations for 2010 onwards

These recommendations are for slug pellets based on metaldehyde. However the generic best practice guidance within these recommendations and actions are also appropriate to follow when using any slug pellet so as to minimise off target impact.

Always plan slug control strategies carefully prior to drilling or planting. Make use of all cultural and non- chemical controls such as cultivations, consolidation (rolling) and cultivars. Where more than one application is anticipated, consider the alternation of active ingredients using metaldehyde at the time of least risk to water contamination.

1. Use minimum effective amount of active substance per ha to avoid drainage and run-off losses.
2. No metaldehyde based pellets to be applied within 6 metres of a watercourse or ditch.
3. Specifically for metaldehyde - based products, use an application rate of no more than 210 grams of active ingredient per hectare. For the additional protection of water, your advisor may recommend rates reduced to 160 grams or less.
4. Maximum metaldehyde total dose to a crop from 1st August to 31st December is apply no more than 210 grams of active ingredient per hectare. For the additional protection of water, your advisor may recommend rates reduced to 160 grams or less.
5. Maximum total dose rate is 700 grams metaldehyde active substance per calendar year.
6. Do not apply when heavy rain is forecast.
7. If drains are flowing, do not apply metaldehyde based slug pellets.

Action 1

- When using metaldehyde - based products, the key issue is stop them directly or indirectly getting into surface water. Not all fields on your farm will pose a problem. So it is worthwhile completing a risk assessment to identify those fields representing the greatest risk to leaching into field drains, run-off, or by direct application. See

www.getpelletwise.com website for an example risk assessment – Stewardship Group Flowchart.

Action 2 – Where **drain flow** is the greatest risk, I will take the following actions:

- Apply no more than 210 g of metaldehyde in the autumn
- Wait until the drains stop running before treatment
- If the first two points are not possible change to another product based on a different active ingredient such as ferric phosphate or methiocarb

The highest risk will be from fields that are drained

Action 3 – Where the risk of **surface run-off** is greatest, I will take the following actions:

- Grow a 6 metre sown strip to act as an effective barrier
- Apply the least amount of metaldehyde active substance that is required to achieve control
- Apply another product based on a different active ingredient such as ferric phosphate or methiocarb

Action 4 – Where **direct application to water** is the greatest risk, I will take the following actions:

- Check the spread width of my applicator and adjust my bout width accordingly
- Leave a 6 metre buffer strip or apply another product based on a different active ingredient such as ferric phosphate or methiocarb which have no buffer zone requirement

Action 5 – To ensure my applicator is accurate, I will:

- Have it regularly serviced and calibrated once a year
- Re-calibrate it every time I use a different product
- Visually check the spread pattern by walking across the field
- Ideally not use a spreader with a greater than 12m width

Poorly calibrated machinery inaccurately applies pellets across the spread width resulting in poor slug control. This often requires further application, wasting money and leads to lower yields.

Action 6 - To prevent metaldehyde getting into water during equipment cleaning, I will:

- Use a stiff brush to clean down in the field away from ditches and field entry and spread any residue

Cleaning the applicator in the yard may result in run-off into drains if a dedicated sump is not available.

Action 7 – To reduce the risk of pellets getting into water in windy conditions, I will:

- Do an environmental risk assessment prior to the application
- Treat it as I would for any other pesticide and wait for the wind to drop

Applying pellets in windy conditions greatly increases the number of pellets being spun into water.

Action 8 – To reduce the risk of poor application from driving too fast, I will:

- Make sure the operator/I am qualified
- Have the applicator serviced and calibrated to a set speed and keep to it
- Do not drive too fast

Driving too fast will reduce bout width and lead to poor application and hence the need for re- treatment.

Action 9 – To reduce the risk from spilt pellets, I will:

- Fill up in the field, but pick up and spread spillages immediately

Spillages, especially during filling, pose a risk to water as well as pets and wildlife.

Action 10 – To ensure that either myself or my operator is as professional as possible, I will:

- Either myself or my operator will attend a slug pelleting seminar, even if we have a PA4A
- Supply our operator with Get PelletWise literature to read and visit website : www.getpelletwise.com
- Display Get PelletWise literature in the farm office

Many operators do not treat slug pellets as pesticides and are not correctly qualified.

For more slug control information visit www.ahdb.org.uk and hot link to slug control.